



Wildflower by phoenix.tycho

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Summary: Oneshot. He watches as she carefully plucks at a small patch of wild dandelions between them and she tries to thread them together like Nancy taught her once last summer. A muffled curse when a wildflower stem splits and another flower deftly plucked. He loves her hands. He has held them more times than he can count and he has recorded every detail to memory. Mileven. Fluff warning

Wildflower

a/n: I don't own Stranger Things etc.

Wildflower

They lay side by side in a patch of grass somewhere around halfway between Hopper's cabin and where he normally parks his Blazer in the woods. They both try to steady their breath and racing heartbeats. The late spring sun is warm on their skin and a bird sings somewhere in the trees above. The air is buzzing with the anticipation of long summer days and staying out way too late at night with friends.

Mike's whole body is sore. He can feel a small bruise or two starting to form under his skin and he vows to himself that he will *never* get her that angry again because it only ends up hurting him. Especially when she accidentally-on-purpose shoves him a little too forcefully into a tree with her mind.

"What are our friends doing today?" Eleven asks suddenly as she wipes the blood from her nose onto the back of her hand. She is lying in the grass a foot or so away from him, gazing up at the tangled canopy of tree branches far above their heads.

"Not sure. Lucas and Max are probably together doing something. Will mentioned going to the library with his brother. And Dustin's out romancing some new girl, I'm sure," Mike croaks. He winces inwardly because it would be too painful to wince *outward*, "Why, do you want them to be here?"

Eleven laughs softly and her curly mop of hair sways across the grass as she shakes her head at the thought of her strange group friends. Her dark brown hair shines softly in the late afternoon sunlight.

"No. I'm happy to spend time alone with you.

"Yeah, me too".

Eleven rolls onto her stomach next to him. Mike watches a ladybug slowly climb over her shoulder. He wonders if he should tell her about it, but ladybugs are small and harmless and it looks cute anyway. His eyes are drawn to her fingers. He watches as she carefully plucks at a small patch of wild dandelions between them and she tries to thread them together like Nancy taught her once last summer. A muffled curse when a wildflower stem splits and another flower deftly plucked. He loves her hands. He has held them more times than he can count and he has recorded every detail to memory.

They're pale and elegant, fingers long and tapered. Her nails are oval, rounded, and bitten to the quick on her right hand only. The nails of her left are cut short to try and disguise it but he knows. He knows she likes to bite her nails when she is anxious or nervous. Always her right hand though and never her left and he finds it that much more endearing.

"I'm sorry," she says after a few more moments of slowly stringing the dandelions together. Her quiet voice is just decibels above a whisper and it draws him from his contemplation.

"For?"

Mike is confused. He feels lost as if she's carried on the previous conversation and he's missed half of it. Maybe she did, maybe he did. He was lost in his thoughts and in her fingers plucking the wildflowers. His eyes move from the flowers in her hands to her the strap of her tank top that is slowly sliding off of her shoulder (the ladybug is now scuttling down her back) to the profile of her face.

"I pushed you. I was...angry," she pauses in order to gather her words before continuing, "Angry and frustrated and I didn't mean to do it that hard. Sorry. Did it hurt?" she asks softly. Her eyes are half closed against the glare of the setting sun. Her long lashes sweep against her pale cheeks and a few unruly curls fall onto her forehead.

"Well, I figured you were getting back at me for hanging out with Katie Luron earlier."

"I was."

He'd been joking when he said it but her tone clearly wasn't. He sits up. He has been lying on the ground for too long and his body demands a change in position. He winces as his abdominal muscles stretch and protest painfully when he sits up.

"Oh," Mike's hand reaches up and his fingers idly run through his hair to comb out leaves and grass and twigs, "I..."

"Why do you hang out with her, Mike?" Eleven questions. She turns to her side, chin and cheek cradled in her palm and her pinky finger lands dangerously close to the corner of her mouth. The short chain of wildflowers lays forgotten in the grass near her hand.

"I wouldn't say we are 'hanging out' since all we really do is work together in physics class" Mike defends, although Eleven continues speaking as if he hadn't said anything.

"I mean, she's pretty and all, don't get me wrong," Eleven pauses to scowl at the flowers forgotten between, "But you guys talk to each other a lot more than you used to. So what are you looking to gain from her?"

Mike leads back and settles himself into the nook of a close by tree. "I help her in physics and she gives me tips for Shakespeare. She's a very nice girl, El."

Eleven snorts air through her nose loudly. The gesture is so very unladylike and he chuckles softly at Hopper's clear influence over her before he teasingly rolls his eyes at her. She gives him a small smile back. "I guess you are right. She is very nice. She gave me study notes for that really hard history test, remember?" her smile falters as she sighs, "It's just that Max was talking about how you and Katie are flirting with each other and that you guys are *together* now. Officially, as in more than friends." She pauses for a breath and Mike raises an eyebrow, waiting to see where this is going.

"What I'm trying to say, to ask that is...is...are you?" her voice comes out in a hurried, embarrassed rush, "Together, I mean, dating."

Mike wants to laugh, but he's afraid to set her quicksilver anger off again.

"El, Max was teasing you," Mike explains with a smile. He knows immediately where her worry and confusion stem from and he knows he can't blame her for missing some of the hidden meanings in a conversation, "I know you have a hard time picking up when someone is teasing, but I can guarantee she was just pulling your leg".

Eleven breaks his gaze to glance quickly down at her jeans, "I don't understand what my legs have to do with anything, Mike".

He smiles softly and rephrases, "It's a saying. It means she was teasing you. Joking."

She doesn't reply to his clarification but instead fiddles with the wildflowers again in nervous embarrassment.

"Friends don't lie, right?" Mike explains, "Katie and I help each other with school sometimes. As you said, she's very nice and, yes, she is kinda pretty, but she isn't exactly my type," he teasingly grins down at her as she turns her head in order to meet his gaze once again, "You should know what my type is by now, El".

Her eyes are wide and her cheeks are quickly stained a very flattering rose color. He likes the surprised look on her features and he offers her another smile, this one softer than the previous teasing one, "Katie and I talk about *normal* things. We talk about school and her silly old cat. Sometimes I just want to talk with someone who doesn't have nightmares all the time or s always thinking about death and killing Demogorgons and the Upside Down, you know? Sometimes I just want to pause the pain and be normal and talking with Katie lets me do that."

He glances at the setting sun before he gets up slowly and tries to look indifferent to the discomfort shooting through his shoulder while at the same time trying to mask it from her so she doesn't feel any more guilty for accidentally-on-purpose using her powers to shove him into a tree. He inhales the sweet smell of grass and wildflowers and watches the ladybug once more. It's poised on her hip, and then suddenly it's in flight, wings flapping to keep it on course from the sudden gust of wind. He smiles, then approaches Eleven with his hand held out.

"Come on, El, let's get back inside. I'm starving. And, besides, Chief Hopper might like it if we get something started for dinner before he gets home."

"Eggos?" She asks hopefully.

"Eh, maybe for dessert," Mike replies with a chuckle.

Eleven tightens the leather jacket (an old hand-me-down from Joyce that she secretly loves) that is tied around her waist before accepting Mike's offered hand. He grips her hand tightly, feels the short nails press into his wrist, and smiles while he pulls her to her feet. She stumbles on a loose rock, regains her footing, and her hands rest on his shoulders for balance. Her face is a breath away and she smells of peppermint toothpaste and lavender.

"You know, I never thanked you."

"For...?"

The smile that she gives him is toothy and beautiful, "Saving me. In the woods those years ago and every day since then."

He grins his own toothy smile back at her. His hands tighten around the small of her back where they've come to rest (though he can't remember moving them there). His hands just feel right, at home where they are on her waist. She takes one last step to close the gap between them and buries her face in soft skin where his neck meets his collar bone.

"Anytime."